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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1103
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2154
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0327
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1007
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0145
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0242
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0125
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1162
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0218
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0544
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 7774
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0601
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 0139
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 VIENTIANE 000295

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR G
DEPT FOR CA/OCS/ACS/EAP
DEPT FOR EAP/EX
DEPT FOR EAP/MLS
DEPT FOR EAP/EP
DEPT FOR INR
DEPT FOR OES/STC (BATES)
DEPT FOR OES/IHA (SINGER AND COMELLA)
DEPT FOR MED
DEPT FOR H

STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE AND GH (CARROLL, CLEMENTS, AND JENNINGS)

STATE PASS TO USTR (BISBEE)

STATE PASS TO HHS/OGHA (WSTEIGER, ELVANDER, AND ABHAT)

USDA PASS TO APHIS

SECDEF FOR OSD/ISA/AP (STERN)

BANGKOK FOR RMO, DCD, USAID (MACARTHUR AND BRADY)

ROME FOR RAO

USPACOM ALSO FOR FPA HUSO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [PREL](#) [AMED](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#)
ETRD, LA
SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE

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¶1. SUMMARY: There have been no new human avian influenza (AI) cases or bird outbreaks since the last report. Massive culling in Vientiane municipality was completed on March 16. The World Bank-assisted compensation program is paying poultry owners sixty percent of the market value of culled birds. The second of two human cases of avian influenza (both were fatalities) was confirmed by testing in Japan. Embassy officers participated in two ceremonies handing over protective equipment to the Government of

Laos (GOL) for use in culling operations and hospitals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) hosted Laos' first-ever workshop on surveillance for AI in wild birds. End summary.

Current Avian Influenza Status

¶2. There have been no new human cases or bird outbreaks since the last report.

¶3. Massive culling and post-culling disinfection took place in seven of Vientiane municipality's nine districts, ending on March 16. Intensive monitoring for human and bird AI cases continued until March 30. Culling greatly exceeded initial expectations of 150,000 birds. Dr. Bounkong Phichit, Vice Minister of Public Health, told DCM and Embassy Infectious Diseases Coordinator on March 27 that over 500,000 birds were culled during a two-week period. At a March 27 meeting at the National Avian and Human Influenza Coordinating Office (NAHICO), district representatives said that public cooperation had been critical to the success of this decisive action, particularly since 80% of poultry stocks are associated with "backyard" production.

Compensation for Culled Birds

¶4. The World Bank has provided \$350,000 to the program to compensate owners of culled poultry. Additionally, the GOL will provide 20 billion kip (approximately US\$2 million) from the central treasury toward this action. A reimbursement listing is being published that will approximate 60% of the market value (pre-outbreak conditions) for various birds and bird products: 25,000 (\$2.50) kip/kilogram for fighting-cocks (which have a market value in Thailand approximating \$300), 45,000 kip (\$4.50) for egg-producing chickens, etc. The 60% figure is lower than the 70% compensation that World Bank representatives told us they expected

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would be paid, and which they described as the worldwide standard for ensuring public compliance.

¶5. Discussions between Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and local district government staff at NAHICO addressed the issue of "safe consumption" of poultry products, i.e. bringing poultry meat from non-affected outbreak areas to the market places for general consumption. Participants outlined safeguards like stamping of chickens and establishing mechanisms to ensure only "safe" products were made available. Hampering efforts was the acknowledged absence of any type of processing facilities in each district to manage inspection actions.

Confirmation of Past Case

¶6. On March 16, the National Institute for Infectious Diseases (NIID), Japan, provided confirmation regarding the second (of two) human cases of H5N1. (Both were fatalities.) This case was identified H5-positive using two primers by RT-PCR testing at the National Center for Laboratory and Epidemiology (NCLE), representing Laos' first detection of H5 without outside assistance aside from the quality assurance and confirmation that NIID provided. This also represents a US CDC success, since Laos' in-country diagnostic capabilities are such that it is now a participant in the WHO Worldwide Influenza Surveillance Network. (Note for specialists: The sequencing carried out using specimen taken from the second H5N1 case in Laos and provided to NIID by NCLE provided the following information: the sequence was 100% identical to that of A/Laos/JP085/2007 (the first Lao human case of H5N1), belonging to Clade 2.3. Testing results to-date at NCLE of 150 patient specimens tested (from 180 received) has yielded 2 H5s, 10 H3s, and 9 FLU Bs. End note.)

Equipment Handovers

¶7. On March 21, the Embassy Infectious Diseases Coordinator turned over 5,000 units of protective equipment and 100 sprayer/disinfection kits provided by USAID to the Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF), National Animal Health Center. The USG partnered with the FAO in this action. Dr Bounkhuang

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Khambounheung, Director General of the DLF, expressed great appreciation for the rapid response of the USG in satisfying critical needs as expressed by the GOL in responding to the current AI outbreak conditions.

¶8. On March 21, the DCM and Infectious Diseases Coordinator partnered with WHO-Laos in turning over \$77,000 worth of protective equipment stocks intended to protect hospital staffs receiving "suspect" human cases of AI. Dr Dong Il Ahn, WHO Country Representative, applauded the CDC-WHO collaboration in helping the GOL respond to the current AI crisis, citing the first two human deaths in Laos that occurred in February and March 2007. Dr Bounkong Phichit, Vice Minister of Public Health, voiced his appreciation, once again, for the outstanding assistance being provided by the GOL. Both of the handover ceremonies received good press coverage.

Wild Birds Surveillance Workshop

¶9. The USDA hosted the first-ever Avian Influenza in Wild Birds Surveillance Workshop held in Laos. The Wildlife Conservation Society helped organize the workshop. Mr Veune Vang Bouttalat, Director General, Department of Forestry, Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture, highlighted the importance of USG and GOL cooperation in hosting this event. The Embassy Infectious Diseases Coordinator cited the strong partnerships between the USG and its representative agencies, FAO, and the Department of Forestry in establishing strategies to monitor wild bird populations for AI, and assess their impact on the spread of AI into domestic (poultry and duck) populations. Also noted was the importance of balancing surveillance and containment of AI in wild bird populations and conservation concerns.

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